

at the age of 60, but it was, not till after the collapse of the Hohenzollern Empire nearly ten years later that he began his vindication. He started with his appointment to the Foreign Office in 1897, and described the twelve years of his glory in two stout volumes. A shorter sequel sketched his activities during the following decade, with special emphasis on his mission to Rome in the winter of 1914-15 and his unsuccessful efforts to keep Italy out of the fray. When the main part of the task was completed, the old statesman turned to his earlier career, narrating in a bulky fourth volume his experiences in Bismarckian Germany and in the capitals of Continental Europe. Written with the pervasive charm of his speeches and conversation, his Memoirs rank as a literary masterpiece : tried by the higher tests of historical accuracy and moral integrity they stand condemned. No apologia of our time has provoked such vigorous reprisals. Wandering down his long gallery Biilow allows himself scarcely a word of praise. His father, Foreign Secretary during the Congress of Berlin, is one exception; Bismarck, who started him on his career, is another. Repeated tributes are paid to the Kaiserin and to his gifted Italian wife for their goodness of heart: neither of them, he explains, was a politician. The picture of the Kaiser is a triumph of polished malevolence, built up by a thousand touches, occasional expressions of personal liking enhancing the severity of the final verdict. Next to William IE his own successor receives the hardest knocks. Bethmann is presented as a spineless mediocrity, whose performance would be almost ludicrous had it not ended in catastrophe. Minor figures, such as Monts and Jagow, are pursued with venomous hate.

The thesis of the work is that Biilow was gravely .handi-

capped by an impulsive master; that he nevertheless piloted the ship of state through the shoals without war or humiliating compromise; that he left his country stronger and safer than he found it; that his legacy was squandered by his incompetent successor. Like most of his tribe he attempts to prove too much. The self-righteousness becomes oppressive, even to the uncritical reader who cannot detect all his wiles. His unsavoury anecdotes of the private lives of contemporaries recoil upon the head of a man who unblushingly describes the amours of his earlier years. The chief surprise is the revelation that the most dazzling figure of post-Bismarckian Germany lacked the instincts of a gentleman. How such a cultivated